

'tis the damn season

TWELVE OF THE ACROSS ANSWERS IN THIS PUZZLE are one letter too long, so leave them out. You'll still have valid entries after the omissions; that's the way I roll. The twelve omitted letters in clue order will yield a seasonal message.

Because of the deletions, as well as the existence of some double definition clues, where one definition is a proper noun but the other isn't, it's difficult to give a proper noun count that doesn't create more confusion than it clears up. So let's just say that there are a handful of proper nouns, both in the grid entries and in the words before entry. Everything else is playable in Scrabble. Ignore punctuation, which is intended to deceive.

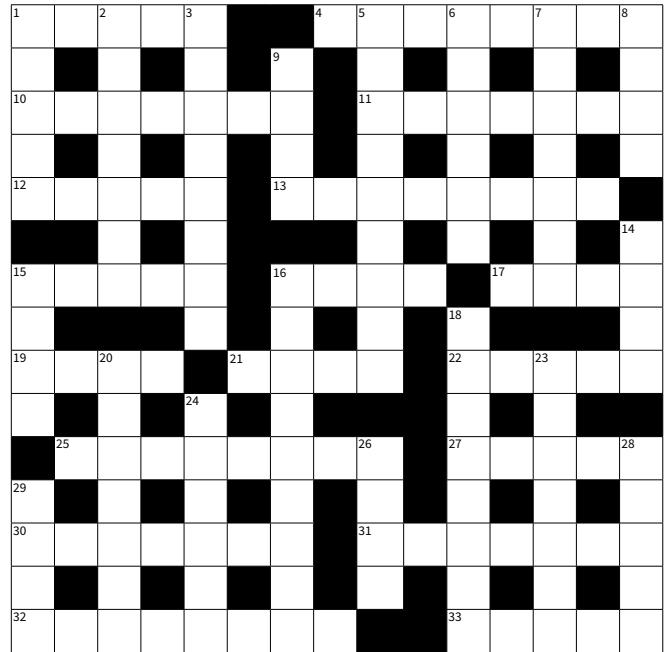
Thanks to Bob Fink, Eric Klis, and Jerry Miccolis for test-solving and editorial suggestions.

Across clues

1. Worse off, but lucky to experience average loss
4. Let unsaid designs be protected
10. Misappropriation of funds when leaders of restructuring corporate entities go between LA and New York
11. Treats monopolies with no left-leaning old liberal dismissals (*two words*)
12. Rats! Misfortune follows inadequate application of SPF
13. Imprisoned one party, right, Grant?
15. No vote over any feature with steep sides
16. Clever English dogs, Nick
17. Virgil led him over dangerous route!
19. Horrible tales of very little importance
21. Surrounded by pyramids near the Eastern border
22. Heroes married? Guess what are the odds?
25. Annie's big song? It certainly isn't "Yesterday"
17. Amasses tips
30. Rocky and Holly in Palestine (*two words*)
31. Crushing in gradient maneuvers
32. Hit it, *Candide*—as promised
33. Some evidence of quiet communists

Down clues

1. He shrugged, "What lasagna?" contentedly
2. Diptych by Warhol decorated in mylar
3. Arranging the debut of demonstrably poor singers
5. None dominated on the frontier chosen for the general
6. Eden is out, unfortunately, and starts to pontificate idiotically on *The Scarlet Letter*



7. California's coming after a number of people from a Manhattan neighborhood
8. Escritoire hidden in Lorde's kitchen
9. NYC's renovated square
14. Outside of legal troubles, lucky breaks for actors?
15. Mobile is close, it sounds like
16. Disk with the first six episodes of *Bridgerton* for William
18. Better bless Ian and many members of the LGBTQ+ community
20. Ruined after taking power and then again ruined
23. Real trouble: engine turns over unconvincingly at first
24. Pattern of tiles representing Miriam's brother
26. Including width, excluding depth
28. Hearing functions as foreshadowing
29. Head of the committee ends early to have some tea

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